Why Do I Have to Take This Class?

GOVT 2305

If you followed the proper sequence for this class – and took it with me - you also covered a similar issue in GOVT 2305.  
  
In that set of slides I tried to convince you that you are taking this class as part of a deliberate plot to turn you into a rational, thinking citizen.

A republic – the argument goes – must rest on an educated rational population if it is to survive.  
  
[Some quotes](http://www.nas.org/articles/U_S_Founding_Fathers_on_Education_in_Their_Own_Words):

**"I know no safe depository of the ultimate powers of the society but the people themselves, (A)nd if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them, but to inform their discretion by education. This is the true corrective of abuses of constitutional power.“   
  
-** Thomas Jefferson

**"It is an object of vast magnitude that systems of education should be adopted and pursued which may not only diffuse a knowledge of the sciences but may implant in the minds of the American youth the principles of virtue and of liberty and inspire them with just and liberal ideas of government and with an inviolable attachment to their own country.“   
  
-** Noah Webster, On the Education of Youth in America

Note the relationship drawn between education and citizenship.  
  
The founders of both the United States and Texas noted the importance of the relationship.

“Cultivated mind is the guardian genius of Democracy, and while guided and controlled by virtue, the noblest attribute of man. It is the only dictator that freemen acknowledge, and the only security which freemen desire.”   
  
– [Mirabeau Lamar](http://www.drtinfo.org/mirabeau-b-lamar).

This observation has led to a series of decisions which has ultimately culminated in the State of Texas deciding that you need to take a couple classes in government in order to graduate with a degree from a public college or university.

In GOVT 2305 we discussed why the founders of the US thought that an educated public was necessary especially in a democratic republic where sovereignty rested with the general population.

I’d suggest a quick review of the [introductory slides for GOVT 2305](http://theweakerparty.wikispaces.com/2305+-+Why+do+you+have+to+take+this+class%3F) to remind you of the argument.   
  
In a nutshell:

The founders of the US were concerned that in establishing a republic, they were dooming the nation to an unstable governing system.   
  
Why? Because republics had failed repeatedly in the past, most notably when the Roman Republic became an empire under the Augustus Caesar. This was a big deal to educated elites of that time. Allusions to Rome were very common around that time.

Before we go to far, what is a republic by the way?  
  
“a state in which supreme power is held by the people and their elected representatives, and which has an elected or nominated president rather than a monarch.”

Preserving a republic means preserving a system of government controlled to some degree by the general population which separates powers and places limits on the executive.  
  
But it also means having a governing system that can be volatile.

Another point hit repeatedly in GOVT 2305 was that a free society – one where people can speak their minds and the media is free to publish much of what it chooses - is inevitably in conflict.  
  
It’s a consequence of living in a free society.

Here is the question posed: Is self government really possible?   
  
That is the American Experiment.

The founders of the US had no illusions that the process would be easy. They knew success was not guaranteed. Here’s a famous back and forth following the conclusion of the [Constitutional Convention](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constitutional_Convention_(United_States))

*Mrs. Powel: "Well Doctor, what have we got, a republic or a monarchy?"   
  
Benjamin Franklin: "*[*A republic if you can keep it*](http://quotationsbook.com/quote/44771/)*“*

Is the general public up to the task of self government? Do polls demonstrate that the general population has the knowledge necessary to rule competently? Some suggest not.  
  
[Down with the People](http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/the_big_idea/2010/02/down_with_the_people.html).  
[How Ignorant Are Americans](http://www.newsweek.com/how-ignorant-are-americans-66053)?

The founders did not think so. They had a low opinion of the capabilities of the general population. The one’s they referred to as “the mob.”  
  
Click here for [an extensive essay](http://cf.linnbenton.edu/artcom/social_science/clarkd/upload/The%20Founding%20Fathers---Hofstadter.pdf) on the founder’s attitude towards democracy. And a telling quote from Alexander Hamilton.

“For my part, I am not much attached to the majesty of the multitude, and therefore waive all pretensions (founded on such conduct), to their countenance. I consider them in general as very ill qualified to judge for themselves what government will best suit their peculiar situations; nor is this to be wondered at. The science of government is not easily understood. Cato will admit, I presume, that men of good education and deep reflection, only, are judges of the form of a government” - [Caesar #2](http://www.infoplease.com/t/hist/federalist/caesar2.html)

As with Hamilton, many founders expected that the mass public would be incapable of self-government and purposely limited participation to a ruling class that would have the ability to govern effectively. Some argue leaders should still ignore the public.  
  
Cato Institute: [Why Policymakers Should Ignore Public Opinion Polls](http://www.cato.org/pubs/pas/pa402.pdf).

Only the educated elite – who also tended to be land owners should be able to participate. Here’s an instructive quote:   
  
[*Those who own America ought to govern it.*](http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/John_Jay)- [John Jay](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Jay)

But as the nation was heading westward to crazy places like Texas it was anticipated that participation (suffrage) would expand.   
  
This made it imperative that the nation be prepared for that expansion.

So the question was: how can a governing system be both stable and tied into the general population?  
  
There are two ways to do so.

1 – design the governing system so that the possibility of instability is minimized.  
  
2 – educate the general population so they are more likely to have a rational, knowledgeable approach to governing.

The purpose of the US Constitution was to address the first issue.  
  
The authors of the Federalist Papers argued that Constitution established a system of government that addressed – to some degree – many of the problems that had vexed previous republics and made it less likely that the US republic would fall due to the same reasons as previous republics.

Since this was covered in 2305, we can let that rest and instead look at the second.   
  
Civic Education  
  
Refer back to the two quotes in the opening slides.

Here’s a complicating factor: education is not one of the delegated powers granted to the national government in the U.S. Constitution. Its is one of the many – open ended - powers reserved to the states. This puts limitations on the ability of the national government to use educational institutions to impact the capability of the general population to govern themselves.  
  
There are efforts to do so nevertheless.

One of the more forceful advocates of civic education was [Thomas Jefferson](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Jefferson).

He was a driving force behind two pieces of legislation that promoted education.  
  
1- [A Bill for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge](http://www.monticello.org/site/research-and-collections/bill-more-general-diffusion-knowledge).  
  
2 - [The Northwest Ordinance](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Northwest_Ordinance).

The first was legislation introduced by Jefferson to the Virginia Legislature to establish a system of public schools in the state. This was done a few years after he wrote the Declaration of Independence,  
  
It failed to pass several times before finally being passed in 1796.

Here is a key part of the preamble:   
 *“Whereas it appeareth that however certain forms of government are better calculated than others to protect individuals in the free exercise of their natural rights, and are at the same time themselves better guarded against degeneracy, yet experience hath shewn, that even under the best forms, those entrusted with power have, in time, and by slow operations, perverted it into tyranny; and it is believed that the most effectual means of preventing this would be, to illuminate, as far as practicable, the minds of the people at large, and more especially to give them knowledge of those facts, which history exhibiteth, that, possessed thereby of the experience of other ages and countries, they may be enabled to know ambition under all its shapes, and prompt to exert their natural powers to defeat its purposes.”*

And a quick reminder of how “tyranny” was defined at that time. “The accumulation of all powers, legislative, executive, and judiciary, in the same hands, whether of one, a few, or many, and whether hereditary, self-appointed, or elective, may justly be pronounced the very definition of tyranny.” – [Federalist 47](http://thomas.loc.gov/home/histdox/fed_47.html).

Jefferson’s principal point was that an educated republic should be able to recognize attempts to establish tyranny, and how to adequately respond to it.   
  
He also argued that educational institutions are supposed to be civic-centered. The goal is to enhance the capacity for self government.

This is a controversial point to this day. Who and/or what should dominate the educational process? The state? Religious organizations? The family?  
  
These debates are especially resonant in a state like Texas.

For additional information and commentary on Jefferson’s bill, among other related items, click here:   
  
[Education for Civitas: The Lessons Americans Must Learn](http://www.civiced.org/papers/papers_butts01.html)

**From the Article:   
  
A Few Lessons from History:** Remember that the very idea of a liberal education was originally linked with the practice and preparation for free citizenship--in the *polis* of democratic Athens and in the *civitas* of republican Rome. Each generation was to acquire the civic knowledge and commitments of "civitas." This was also the view of discerning founders of the American Republic and of their successors who decided that the responsibilities and the rights of American citizenship in a democratic republic should be defined by law and nourished by a common civic education and civic culture rather than by kinship, ethnicity, race, religion, class, or hereditary status.

Again, here’s a complicating factor:  
  
Education falls under the reserved powers of the states.

Nevertheless, Jefferson pushed efforts to promote education in the new territories.  
  
This was part of the intent of the Northwest Ordinance, as well as other laws related to how the territories to the west would be developed.

[The Northwest Ordinance](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Northwest_Ordinance) (1787) established the rules regarding the development of the territory that would become Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois and Wisconsin ([click here for background from the Library of Congress](http://www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/ourdocs/northwest.html)).  
  
It encouraged the development of schools in order to help develop the capacity for self rule. .

Here’s a key component of the bill: *Art. 3. Religion, morality, and knowledge, being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged.*

This is one of the reasons why, coast to coast, there is compulsory K-12 education as well as a comprehensive state sponsored system of colleges and universities.

Prior to the US Constitution, the [Land Ordinance of 1785](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Land_Ordinance_of_1785) – which helped determine how land to the west would be divided up – established that land would be set aside for the development of cities that would include portions set aside for educational purposes.  
  
This was the basic layout for cities as projected by the ordinance.

The plots in the middle of the town - 15, 16, 21 and 22 – were set aside for public functions.  
  
Plot 16 was to be for public schools.

The entire design was meant to enhance the ability of the population to govern themselves be ensuring that educational institutions would be available for the general population and would be accessible by all by being in the middle of town.  
  
Again – that’s the intent not necessarily the realization.

Here are key parts of the Wikipedia entry on the [Land Ordinance of 1785](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Land_Ordinance_of_1785). It points out the intent to establish public schools and their relationship with civic education and duty.

“The systematic and highly organized westward settlements, with their local governments and central square dedicated towards public education were a concerted effort to inspire civic duty and participation in the democratic process. Usher relates this initiative to “the Supreme Court in [Cooper v. Roberts](http://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/59/173/case.html) (1855), ‘plant in the heart of every community the same sentiments of grateful reverence for the wisdom, forecast, and magnanimous statesmanship of those who framed the institutions of these new States.”

]The westward expansion therefore was not only a tool for raising much needed funds, but also a tool in a grand socializing experiment to inoculate the settlers to democratic ideals. The hope was that the unique planning of each township with a public school centrally located, coupled with the obligation of each township’s local citizens to take part in the civic process of governing the township, teaching and building the schools, and maintaining order, would instill the democratic ideals crucial to the nation’s success.

The point:   
  
The design and funding mechanisms established early on – at least at the national level – were intended to facilitate the education of the citizenry. There is a relationship between urban design, education, civic virtue and the development and viability of democracy.

But not all cities in all regions followed these guidelines. There was regional disagreement over the whether the development of newer states and cities should incorporate educational institutions.   
  
This exhibits a tension we will explore soon enough between the various political cultures that exist in the US. In this case between that prevalent in New England and in the South.

A bit more from the Wikipedia on the [Land Ordinance of 1785](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Land_Ordinance_of_1785).  
  
This points out that attitudes about education and the design of cities varied in New England and the South.

“The highly planned and surveyed western townships established in the Land Ordinance of 1785, were heavily influenced by the New England settlements of the colonial era, particularly the land grant provisions of the Ordinances which dedicated land towards public education and other government uses. In colonial times, New England settlements contained dedicated public space for schools and churches, which often held a central role in the community.

Two geographically and ideologically distinct colonial land systems were competing at such time in history – the New England system and the Southern system. While the primary influence on the Land Ordinance of 1785 was the New England land system of the colonial era, marked by its emphasis on community development and systematic planning, the exceedingly individualistic Southern land system also played a role.

The New England land system, while the primary influence on the great land ordinances of the 1780s, was not the only land system influence. The Southern land system, marked by individualism and personal initiative, also helped shape the ordinance. While the New England land system was premised on community-based development, the Southern land system was premised on individual frontiersman appropriating undeveloped land to call their own. The Southern pioneer claimed property and the local surveyor would demarcate it for him. - [Land Ordinance 1785](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Land_Ordinance_of_1785)

New England settlements were oriented towards the community.  
  
Southern settlements were oriented towards the individual – notable the large scale landowners.

This also suggests that different parts of the country have different orientations towards education. New England settlements see educational institutions as necessary parts of the public landscape. Southern settlements, not so much.  
  
We will discuss this further when we talk about political culture in the states in an upcoming lecture.

Not all states sought to educate the population and enhance the ability of the general population to participate.  
  
In some states efforts were made to retain the power structure in place when the state was established. Restrictions on education would help do so.

Now, a bit more on Texas.

We will discuss education in Texas more fully later this semester.  
  
For background on education in the state, click on this site on [education](http://www.texasalmanac.com/topics/education) in the Texas Almanac, as well as the [education](http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/khe01) page on the website of the Texas State Historical Association.

While Texas was settled by southerners who did not share New England’s ideas about the central role of education within the community, access to education was mentioned prominently in key documents in early Texas history.

For example, The Texas Declaration of Independence contains a grievance against the Mexican Government that:   
  
*It has failed to establish any public system of education, although possessed of almost boundless resources, (the public domain,) and although it is an axiom in political science, that unless a people are educated and enlightened, it is idle to expect the continuance of civil liberty, or the capacity for self government.*

Note the point they made. If people are not educated, they cannot govern themselves, not can they preserve their liberties.  
  
There was a general belief that minimizing access to education was one of the ways the Mexican government could subdue the Texans.

Notice also the mention of the “public domain.”   
  
Generally tuition free public education is funded by some mechanism tied into public lands. We will discuss this further when we talk about education more thoroughly towards the end of the semester.

Texas had a system of public education when it was a republic, bills establishing a public education system were passed in 1839 and 1840 under the presidency of [Mirabeau Buonoparte](http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fla15) [Lamar](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mirabeau_B._Lamar).

Lamar is known as the Father of Texas Education. But so was [Ezekiel Cullen](http://theloopscoop.com/the-father-of-texas-education-mirabeau-b-lamar-or-ezekiel-w-cullen), and [A.M. Aikin](http://connection.ebscohost.com/c/biographies/43893450/the-father-texas-education-a-m-aikin-modernization-texas-public-schools).  
  
Here’s a quote about Lamar which emphasized his role in establishing public education in the state, both K-12 and higher ed.

 “When a public school was a novelty and the Republic’s treasury and credit were at their lowest, only a daring mind and a champion of enlightened liberty could have conceived the idea for insuring the education of the future Texas generations.”

For what its worth, here’s a quote from [Sam Houston](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sam_Houston) regarding education:   
  
“The benefits of education and of useful knowledge, generally diffused through a community, are essential to the preservation of a free government.”

Sam Houston also had this to say:   
  
“I would not be gotten into a schoolhouse until I was eight years old. Nor did I accomplish much after I started. I doubt if I had gone to school six months in all when my father died. I was fourteen at the time.”

The Republic of Texas would establish public schooling for Anglo-Americans (it was illegal to educate slaves and schooling was restricted to Latino children).  
  
 17.712 acres of land in each county was set aside to support the schools.

While the Constitution of the Republic of Texas did not establish an educational system, the 1845 Constitution – which was written after statehood was granted – did: [Article Ten](http://tarlton.law.utexas.edu/constitutions/texas1845/a10).   
  
Note the wording of the opening section, it is very Jeffersonian.

“A general diffusion of knowledge being essential to the preservation of the rights and liberties of the people, it shall be the duty of the legislature of this State to make suitable provision for the support and maintenance of public schools.”

There is similar language in the current – 1876 – constitution. This is the opening of [Article 7](http://tarlton.law.utexas.edu/constitutions/text/IART07.html):   
  
SECTION 1. A general diffusion of knowledge being essential to the preservation of the liberties and rights of the people, it shall be the duty of the Legislature of the State to establish and make suitable provision for the support and maintenance of an efficient system of public free schools.

There are periodic complaints made that the state of Texas has violated this part of the Constitution.  
  
What does it mean to “make suitable provision for the support and maintenance of an efficient system of public free schools?”

There is still a court case regarding the drastic cuts – over $5 billion - made in the 82nd Legislature. The court is being asked whether those cuts violated the suitable provision requirement?  
  
See: [Texas Tribune: School Finance](http://www.texastribune.org/tribpedia/school-finance/).

Article 7 also contains text establishing institutions of higher education.

The laws that provide the detail for K-12 and Higher Ed can be found in the [Education Code](http://www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/).  
  
All laws related to Higher Education can be found in Title 3.

Junior Colleges are authorized in Title 3, Subtitle G, Chapter 130.  
  
[Click here to check it out](http://www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/Docs/ED/htm/ED.130.htm).

Alvin Community College is mentioned far down the page. Look for Sec. 130.163.  
  
Here is the text:

Sec. 130.163. ALVIN COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT SERVICE AREA. The service area of the Alvin Community College District includes the territory within:  
  
(1) the Alvin, Danbury, and Pearland independent school districts; and  
  
(2) the part of the Angleton Independent School District annexed by the community college district before September 1, 1995.  
  
Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 971, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1995.

Not much to it.

Title 3 also contains information related to the [Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board](https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/mdtpx). This can be found in Subtitle B, Chapter 61, [which you can find by clicking here](http://www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/Docs/ED/htm/ED.61.htm).

[From the TSHA](https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/mdtpx): “The Texas College and University System Coordinating Board was established by the Fifty-ninth Texas Legislature in 1965 to provide unified planning and development of a comprehensive system of [higher education](https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/khhxr). In 1987 the name was changed to Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.”

This is the institution which, among many other things, establishes the core curriculum for all colleges and universities in the state.   
  
They determine what basic classes need to be taken in order to graduate with a degree from a public institution in Texas.

They are the people who determine what you need to take, and decided that this includes a couple of classes in government.

More interesting detail: “To qualify for board service, no member may be professionally employed in [education](https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/khe01) or serving on the board of a junior college.”  
  
I don’t believe this is true for most other regulatory agencies in the state.

Controversies over Content

As you can imagine, setting the government curriculum can be very controversial. Ideological groups weigh in on how government should be taught and which events and personalities should be emphasized.

The controversy flares up mostly for K-12 education – primary and secondary schools. Not so much for higher education – though it has in the past.  
  
A major related controversy is the content of the high school curriculum.

Texas State Board of Education reviews the K-12 curriculum for each required subject every few years.   
  
In 2010 it reviewed the history and government curriculum. It was highly controversial and received nation wide media coverage.

Some stories from that time detailing the conflict:  
  
- [Ignoring Experts' Pleas, Texas Board Approves Controversial Curriculum Standards](http://chronicle.com/article/Texas-Board-Approves/65661/)- [Politics of Education: New Texas Social Sciences Curriculum Standards Fraught with Ideology, Critics Say](http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/Media/education-texas-social-sciences-curriculum-standards-stirs-nationwide/story?id=10700720)  
- [Texas Conservatives Win Curriculum Change](http://www.nytimes.com/2010/03/13/education/13texas.html?_r=1)  
- [SBOE Conservatives Rewrite American History Books](http://www.texastribune.org/texas-education/social-studies-standards-debate/sboe-conservatives-rewrite-american-history-books/)

From the Texas Tribune: *“ . . . beneath such spats lie far deeper ideological tussles, over disputed Biblical underpinnings of the nation’s founding; the notion of America as uniquely superior, even divinely ordained; and the proper context and credit in exploring the struggles of oppressed minority groups.”*

Political groups believe that dominating the curriculum helps their cause. Schools are argued to be “agents of socialization” which help people form political opinions.  
  
Actual proof that this matters is lacking, but it is assumed that schools determine how people are likely to be oriented towards political questions, so fights are ongoing attempting to do so.

To look at the current content of social science education in K-12 in Texas click here for the [TEKS Social Studies Standards](http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index2.aspx?id=3643).

An additional controversy: Should there be a national standard or should leach state have its own requirements.   
  
If states teach government as they see fit, is there enough in common among the people of the nation to have a national dialogue on public matters?

From the Center for Civic Education: [National Standards for Civics and Government](http://www.civiced.org/index.php?page=stds).  
  
From the Atlantic: [Should States Let the Federal Government Set Education Standards for Schools?](http://www.theatlanticwire.com/politics/2010/07/should-states-let-the-federal-government-set-education-standards-for-schools/23660/)

Again, these controversies are far less prominent in higher education, partially due to the idea that older students are more mature and less subject to indoctrination.

But the requirement remains.  
  
And in case you’re wondering, Texas is only one of a handful of states that have this requirement.

Lucky You

This overview should explain why the Texas legislature wants you to takes this class.   
  
*If you want to file a grievance about it – that’s where you should take it. . . . Just sayin’*